

**Preliminary Amendment of U.S. National Stage for International Application
PCT/EP/2004/002440 filed March 10, 2004**

In the Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-11, without prejudice, and add new claims 12-36, in accordance with the following complete listing of all claims ever presented. This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 12 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters of ethercarboxylic acids corresponding to general formula (I):



in which R is a C₁₋₅₀ alkyl, alkenyl or alkylphenyl group derived from an alcohol, OAlk stands for a ring-opened ethylene oxide, propylene oxide or butylene oxide unit, and n is a number from 0 to 100.

Claim 13 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 12, wherein R is a linear C₁₋₃₆ alkyl group, optionally containing other functional groups derived from an alcohol.

Claim 14 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 12, wherein R is a linear C₁₋₁₈ alkyl group derived from a monofunctional alcohol.

Claim 15 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 12, wherein R is a linear hydroxyl-terminated C₂₋₃₆ alkyl group derived from a difunctional alcohol.

Claim 16 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 12, wherein OAlk stands for the ring-opened ethylene oxide unit OCH₂CH₂.

Claim 17 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 12, wherein n is a number from 1 to 20.

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Claim 18 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 12, wherein the sterol or stanol is a phytosterol or phytostanol.

Claim 19 (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 18, wherein the phytosterol or phytostanol comprises one or more compounds selected from β -sitosterol, campesterol, stigmasterol, brassicasterol, stigmasterol and campestanol.

Claim 20. (New): Sterol and/or stanol esters according to claim 18, wherein the phytosterol or phytostanol is derived from rapeseed oil.

Claim 21 (New): A process for the production of sterol and/or stanol esters of ethercarboxylic acids, comprising esterifying sterols, stanols or mixtures thereof with ethercarboxylic acids or their salts corresponding to formula (II):



in which R is a C_{1-50} alkyl, alkenyl, or alkylphenyl group derived from an alcohol, OAlk stands for a ring-opened ethylene oxide, propylene oxide or butylene oxide unit, n is a number from 0 to 100 and X is hydrogen or an alkali metal, in the presence of an esterification catalyst.

Claim 22 (New): The process according to claim 21, wherein R is a linear C_{1-36} alkyl group, optionally containing other functional groups derived from an alcohol.

Claim 23 (New): The process according to claim 21, wherein OAlk stands for the ring-opened ethylene oxide unit OCH_2CH_2 .

Claim 24 (New): The process according to claim 21, wherein n is a number from 1 to 20.

Claim 25 (New): The process according to claim 21, wherein the sterol or stanol is a phytosterol or phytostanol.

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Claim 26 (New): The process according to claim 25, wherein the phytosterol or phytostanol is derived from rapeseed oil.

Claim 27 (New): A cosmetic composition comprising a sterol and/or stanol ester of ether carboxylic acids according to claim 12.

Claim 28 (New): A food or food supplement comprising a sterol and/or stanol ester of ether carboxylic acids according to claim 12.

Claim 29 (New): A food or food supplement according to claim 28, wherein the sterol or stanol is a phytosterol or phytostanol.

Claim 30 (New): A food or food supplement according to claim 29, wherein the phytosterol or phytostanol is derived from rapeseed oil.

Claim 31 (New): An emulsifier or co-emulsifier comprising a sterol and/or stanol ester of ethercarboxylic acids corresponding to general formula (I):



in which R is a C₁₋₅₀ alkyl, alkenyl or alkylphenyl group derived from an alcohol, OAlk stands for a ring-opened ethylene oxide, propylene oxide or butylene oxide unit, and n is a number from 0 to 100.

Claim 32 (New): An emulsifier or co-emulsifier according to claim 21, wherein R is a linear C₁₋₃₆ alkyl group, optionally containing other functional groups derived from an alcohol.

Claim 33 (New): An emulsifier or co-emulsifier according to claim 21, wherein OAlk stands for the ring-opened ethylene oxide unit OCH₂CH₂.

Claim 34 (New): An emulsifier or co-emulsifier according to claim 21, wherein n is a

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number from 1 to 20.

Claim 35 (New): An emulsifier or co-emulsifier according to claim 21, wherein the sterol or stanol is a phytosterol or phytostanol.

Claim 36 (New): An emulsifier or co-emulsifier according to claim 21, wherein the phytosterol or phytostanol is derived from rapeseed oil.